

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. For use with a communications system including at least one message server operative to receive and store messages for retrieval, each message having a sender address and a recipient address, an automated method to reply to a sender, comprising:

5                   storing a reply message to a message sent having a selected recipient address and at least one sender address;

                      storing a reply file for the reply message; and

                      automatically forwarding the reply message and reply file

10                 to the sender.

2. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply message and reply file are forwarded to the sender at the at least one sender address.

3. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply message and reply file are forwarded to the sender at an address different from that identified in the message.

15                 4. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply file is attached to the reply message.

5. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply file is a text file.

6. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply file is an image file.

7. A method as in claim 6, wherein the image file is a digital still image.

20                 8. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply file is a video clip.

9. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply file is an audio clip.

10. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reply file comprises an Internet link.

11. For use with a communications system including at least one message server operative to receive and store messages for retrieval, each message having a sender address and a recipient address, an automated method to reply to a sender, comprising:

- 5           storing a reply message to a message sent having a selected recipient address and at least one sender address;  
              storing a reply Internet link for attachment to the reply message; and  
              automatically forwarding the reply message and reply Internet link to the sender.

10          12. For use with a communications system including at least one e-mail server in communication with a plurality of computers, each of the computers operative to send and receive e-mail messages via the at least one e-mail server, each e-mail message having a sender address and a recipient address, an automated method for an e-mail recipient to reply to e-mail messages from e-mail senders without retrieving the e-mail messages, comprising:

- 15           storing a reply message from the e-mail recipient for an e-mail message sent having the recipient's address and a selected sender address;  
              storing a reply file for attachment to the reply message; and  
              automatically forwarding the reply message and reply file to the  
20          sender address.

13. A method as in claim 12, further comprising storing the reply message and reply file at the at least one e-mail server.

14. For use with a communications system including at least one e-mail server in communication with a plurality of computers, each of the computers operative to send and receive e-mail messages via the at least one e-mail server, each e-mail message having a sender address and a recipient address, an automated method for an e-mail recipient to reply to e-mail messages from e-mail senders without retrieving the e-mail messages, comprising:

- 25           for each of a plurality of selected sender addresses, storing at the e-mail server: (a) at least one corresponding reply message from the e-mail recipient;

and (b) at least one corresponding reply file from the e-mail recipient, for e-mail messages sent having the recipient's address and the selected sender address; and

5 on receipt at the at least one e-mail server of an e-mail message having the recipient's address and one of the selected sender addresses, automatically forwarding: (a)the at least one stored reply message; and (b) the at least one stored reply file, to the sender at the selected sender address.

15. A method as in claim 14, further comprising:

storing at the e-mail server a plurality of corresponding reply messages;

10 storing at the e-mail server a plurality of corresponding reply files;

selecting a reply message in accordance with a first predetermined criteria; and

15 selecting a reply file in accordance with a second predetermined criteria.

16. A method as in claim 15, wherein the first or second predetermined criteria is selected from the group consisting of date, time, day of week, number of e-mail messages sent to the recipient, number of e-mail messages sent to the recipient by the sender, the date the recipient last retrieved e-mail, the time the recipient last retrieved e-mail, the date the recipient last received e-mail from the sender, and the date the recipient last sent e-mail to the sender.

17. An e-mail system, comprising:

25 at least one e-mail server in communication with a plurality of computers, each of the computers operative to send and receive e-mail messages via the at least one e-mail server, each e-mail message having a sender address and a recipient address, the e-mail server operative to:

(a) store a reply message from the e-mail recipient to an e-mail message sent having the recipient's address and a selected sender address;

(b) store a reply file for attachment to the reply message; and

30 (c) automatically forward the reply message and reply

file to the sender address.

18. An e-mail system, comprising:

at least one e-mail server in communication with a plurality of computers, each of the computers operative to send and receive e-mail messages via the at least one e-mail server, each e-mail message having a sender address and a recipient address, the e-mail server operative to:

(a) for each of a plurality of sender addresses, storing at least one reply message from the e-mail recipient for an e-mail message sent having the recipient's address and the selected sender address;

10 (b) store at least one reply file for attachment to the at least one reply message;

(c) on receipt at the at least one e-mail server of an e-mail message having the recipient's address and one of the selected sender addresses, automatically forward the at least one stored reply message and the at least one stored reply file to the selected sender address.

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19. An e-mail system as in claim 18, wherein the e-mail server is further operative to store a plurality of reply messages and a plurality of reply files for each selected sender address and select a reply message and a reply file in accordance with predetermined criteria.

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20. An e-mail system as in claim 19, wherein the predetermined criteria is selected from the group consisting of date, time, day of week, the number of e-mail messages sent to the recipient, the number of e-mail messages sent to the recipient by the sender, the date the recipient last retrieved e-mail, the date the recipient last received e-mail from the sender, and the date the recipient last sent e-mail to the sender.

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21. For use with a communications system including at least one message server operative to receive and store image files for retrieval from a digital camera, each image file having a sender address and a recipient address, an automated method to reply to a sender, comprising:

storing a reply message to an image file sent having a selected  
recipient address and at least one sender address; and  
automatically forwarding the reply message to the sender.

22. A method as in claim 21, wherein the reply message is forwarded to  
5 the sender at the at least one sender address.

23. A method as in claim 21, wherein the reply message is forwarded to  
the sender at an address different from that identified in the image file.

24. A method as in claim 21, wherein the reply message is forwarded to  
the sender at an address different from that identified in the image file.

10 25. For use with a communications system including at least one message  
server operative to receive and store image files for retrieval from a digital camera,  
each image file having a sender address and a recipient address, an automated  
method to reply to a sender, comprising:

15 storing a reply message to an image file sent having a selected  
recipient address and at least one sender address;  
storing a reply file for the reply message; and  
automatically forwarding the reply message and reply file to the  
sender.

20 26. A method as in claim 25, wherein the reply message and reply file  
are forwarded to the sender at the at least one sender address.

27. A method as in claim 25, wherein the reply message and reply file  
are forwarded to the sender at an address different from that identified in the image  
file.

25 28. A method as in claim 25, wherein the reply message and reply file

are forwarded to the sender at an address different from that identified in the image file.

29. A method as in claim 25, wherein the reply file comprises a digital image.